

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1856
ANSWERED ON:12.03.2008
WHO GUIDELINES ON BREAST FEEDING
Subbarayan Shri K.

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the WHO guidelines regarding breast feeding for the infants; and
- (b) the steps taken/ proposed to be taken by the Government for ensuring compliance of the WHO guidelines in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE(SMT. PANABAKA LAKSHMI)

(a): The details of the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines regarding breast feeding of the infants is annexed.

(b): The Ministry of Women and Child Development based on the WHO Global Strategy issued guidelines on Infant and Young child Feeding in 2004. The Department of Family Welfare under its Reproductive and Child Health Programme (RCH) II / National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), is implementing the following to promote Infant and Young Child Feeding :

Behaviour change to promote breastfeeding by involving all grassroots workers viz. Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHAs), Angan Wadi Workers (AWWs), Auxilliary Nurse Midwife (ANMs), village practitioners, male workers, link volunteers etc.; panchayats, self help groups, agents of change, opinion leaders, Non Governmental Organisation (NGOs); using all health related contacts to promote improved breastfeeding; employing mass media.

Augment ANMs/AWWs contacts with mothers. Promote home visits by ASHAs/AWWs in the antenatal and postnatal periods as a part of Integrated Management of Neonatal and Child Hood Illness (IMNCI) activities and use contacts to promote breast feeding and complementary feeding.

Use all ANM/male health worker contacts for feeding counseling. Use immunization sessions, field visits of ANMs and male health workers for feeding counseling.

Strengthen breastfeeding promotion efforts at facilities.

Improve feeding counseling skills of providers like ASHAs, AWWs, ANMs, Lady Health visitor (LHVs) etc.

Annexure

WHO Global strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding

The Global Strategy is based on the evidence of nutrition's significance in the early months and years of life, and of the crucial role that appropriate feeding practices play in achieving optimal health outcomes. Lack of breastfeeding – and especially lack of exclusive breastfeeding during the first half-year of life – is important risk factors for infant and childhood morbidity and mortality that are only compounded by inappropriate complementary feeding. The life-long impact includes poor school performance, reduced productivity, and impaired intellectual and social development.

The global strategy for infant and young child feeding is based on respect, protection, facilitation and fulfillment of accepted human rights principles. Nutrition is a crucial, universally recognized component of the child's right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children have the right to adequate nutrition and access to safe and nutritious food, and both are essential for fulfilling their right to the highest attainable standard of health. Women, in turn, have the right to proper nutrition, to decide how to feed their children, and to full information and appropriate conditions that will enable them to carry out their decisions. These rights are not yet realized in many environments.

The aim of this strategy is to improve – through optimal feeding – the nutritional status, growth and development, health, and thus the survival of infants and young children

The strategy's specific objectives are:

- ? to raise awareness of the main problems affecting infant and young child feeding, identify approaches to their solution, and provide a framework of essential interventions;
- ? to increase the commitment of governments, international organizations and other concerned parties¹ for optimal feeding practices for infants and young children;

? to create an environment that will enable mothers, families and other caregivers in all circumstances to make – and implement – informed choices about optimal feeding practices for infants and young children.

Breastfeeding is an unequalled way of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants; it is also an integral part of the reproductive process with important implications for the health of mothers.

As a global public health recommendation, infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months life to achieve optimal growth, development and health.

Thereafter, to meet their evolving nutritional requirements, infants should receive nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods while breastfeeding continues for up to two years of age or beyond.

Exclusive breastfeeding from birth is possible except for a few medical conditions, and unrestricted exclusive breastfeeding results in ample milk production.

Infants are particularly vulnerable during the transition period when complementary feeding begins. Ensuring that their nutritional needs are met thus requires that complementary foods be:

timely – meaning that they are introduced when the need for energy and nutrients exceeds what can be provided through exclusive and frequent breastfeeding;

adequate – meaning that they provide sufficient energy, protein and micronutrients to meet a growing child's nutritional needs;

safe – meaning that they are hygienically stored and prepared, and fed with clean hands using clean utensils and not bottles and teats;

properly fed – meaning that they are given consistent with a child's signals of appetite and satiety, and that meal frequency and feeding method – actively encouraging the child, even during illness, to consume sufficient food using fingers, spoon or self-feeding – are suitable for age.

The strategy is intended as a guide for action; it is based on accumulated evidence of the significance of the early months and years of life for child growth and development and it identifies interventions with a proven positive impact during this period. Moreover to remain dynamic, successful strategy implementation will rely on keeping pace with developments, while new clinical and population-based research is stimulated and behavioural concerns are investigated.

Governments, international organizations and other concerned parties share responsibility for ensuring the fulfillment of the right of children to the highest attainable standard of health and the right of women to full and unbiased information, and adequate health care and nutrition. Each partner should acknowledge and embrace its responsibilities for improving the feeding of infants and young children and for mobilizing required resources. All partners should work together to achieve fully this strategy's aim and objectives, including by forming fully transparent innovative alliances and partnerships consistent with accepted principles for avoiding conflict of interest. The primary obligation of governments is to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate a comprehensive national policy on infant and young child feeding. In addition to political commitment at the highest level, a successful policy depends on effective national coordination to ensure full collaboration of all concerned government agencies, international organizations and other concerned parties. This implies continual collection and evaluation of relevant information on feeding policies and practices. Regional and local governments also have an important role to play in implementing this strategy.